

Type 2 Diabetes and Exercise

Exercise is very important in managing type 2 diabetes. Combining diet, exercise, and medicine (when prescribed) can help control your weight and blood sugar level.

Exercise helps control type 2 diabetes by:

- Improving your body's use of insulin
- Burning excess body fat, helping to decrease and control weight (decreased body fat results in improved insulin sensitivity)
- Improving muscle strength
- Increasing bone density and strength
- Lowering blood pressure
- Helping to protect against heart and blood vessel disease by lowering 'bad' LDL cholesterol
- Improving blood circulation and reducing your risk of heart disease
- Increasing energy level and enhancing work capacity
- Reducing stress, promoting relaxation, and releasing tension and anxiety

Is Blood Sugar Ever Too High to Exercise?

Yes. In some cases, you should hold off on exercising if your blood sugar is very high. Ask your doctor about if and when you should hold off on exercise.

What Types of Exercise Are Best for Diabetes?

While most any exercise is healthy for people with diabetes, let's look at some specific types of exercise and their benefits:

Strength Training and Type 2 Diabetes

Aerobic Fitness and Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 Diabetes and Exercise Tips

- To reduce the risk of hypoglycemia if you have diabetes, follow a regular routine of exercising, eating your meals, and taking your medicines at the same time each day.
- Prolonged or strenuous exercise can cause your body to produce adrenaline and other hormones that can counteract the effects of insulin and cause your blood sugar to rise. If you are participating in strenuous exercise (exercising at your maximum capacity) or prolonged exercise (lasting for several hours or more), your insulin and/or oral diabetic medicine or your calories may need to be changed. Talk to your health care provider about how to adjust your medicine.
- Be careful exercising when your medicine is reaching its peak effect.
- Depending on the time of exercise, reducing your dose of either long-acting insulin or short-acting insulin may be necessary. Your doctor can recommend how to make this adjustment.

- Exercise with someone who knows you have diabetes and knows what to do if you have a low blood-sugar reaction.
- Wear a medical identification tag (for example, MedicAlert) or carry an identification card that states you have diabetes.
- Check your sugars before, during and after exercise and always carry a small carbohydrate snack such as a fruit or fruit drink since low blood sugars can occur.

General Exercise Guidelines and Precautions

- If you have diabetes, check with your health care provider before you begin an exercise program.
- Start slowly and gradually increase your endurance.
- Choose an activity that you enjoy. You'll be more likely to stick with a program if you enjoy the activity. Make exercise a lifetime commitment.
- Consider a water exercise program. Some other exercise options include walking, riding a stationary bicycle, or swimming.
- Exercise at least three to four times per week for about 30 minutes each session. Ideally, you should exercise every day. A good exercise program should include a 5- to 10-minute warm-up and at least 15 to 30 minutes of continuous aerobic exercise (such as walking or biking) followed by a 5-minute cool down.
- Add muscle strengthening or resistance exercises to your routine 2 or 3 times a week.
- Wear good shoes and practice proper foot care.
- Drink water before, during, and after exercise to prevent dehydration.
- Do not ignore pain -- discontinue any exercise that causes unexpected pain. If you continue to perform the activity while you are in pain, you may cause unnecessary stress or damage to your joints.

Exercise is a lifetime commitment. Regardless of your weight, you should exercise at least 150 minutes a week spread out over at least three days. Ideally, you should not go more than two days without exercising.

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